

May 6, 1963

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
716 Alvarado Row
Stanford, California

Re: MAXWELL

Dear Josh:

Regarding your comment on the I.R. Maxwell Scientific International Documentation & Procurement Centre, I can only make the following comments.

C We had a man in here who now works for Pergamon Press. He is leaving soon and is quite anxious to affiliate with somebody interested in establishing retail and/or mail order book outlet. There is probably a great need in Philadelphia and other cities, notably Washington, D.C., for science book centers. I don't think there is anything like Stacey's of San Francisco in any other city in the United States. I don't think there would be any major insurmountable problems in setting up a punch card system such as that which is now used by Maxwell, and probably now there are better methods.

O However, the main problem at the moment is this. A book distribution and sales division of ISI is just another distraction until we get the entire financing picture in order. If we knew that the financial situation were covered in the next several years, there is no doubt that we could very aggressively move ahead by employing the right people. From personal experience in working in book shops, the book business requires a lot of detailed attention. This doesn't mean that we can't move, sometime in the near future, into the listing of books in Current Contents, but this is quite another step from establishing a retail or large scale mail order operation. As soon as we have completed our survey of Current Contents readers, we can make a decision on when to move ahead on the listing of books. Initially, it would appear that readers are divided in their feelings about covering more journals rather than covering books.

P There is no doubt that our Current Contents mailing list alone would place us in a very strong position as regards the sale of books, but does this take a higher priority over citation indexing and other seemingly more important projects?

Y I don't know the book by Iverson on "A Programming Language". I'll have somebody check into it.

As regards Minsky's statement on the need for "clumping" theory, this is just another word for automatic classification. Stiles and most of the other people to whom he refers attempt to relate the subject matters of various papers by statistical and other analyses of the language of the text. I am checking out several of the items mentioned in his letter to you but at the moment I fail to see what he or you have in mind as regards citation index analysis.

There was a Dr. Solomon Schneyer here today who is dying to have an automatic system of designing subject fields and was hopeful that citation

indexing would provide this. However, I pointed out that we haven't been able to do any serious cycling experiments to determine the validity of citation indexing for this purpose. Could you be more explicit as regards your own feelings about designing subject fields with citation data? He is with the National Institute of General Medical Sciences and apparently wants to be able to identify subject fields without having to specify in advance either cited authors or cited journals. We tried to indicate that one could define the field of exobiology, for example, by beginning with your paper in Science. However, what he wants is for the system to tell him that a field like exobiology is, in fact, emerging.

Sincerely yours,

Eugene Garfield
Director

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